

Message Text

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73

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-15 OMB-01 IO-13 RSR-01 /119 W

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R 241446Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4691

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L VALLETTA 1734

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MT, IS

SUBJ: MALTESE-ISRAELI RELATIONS

REF: VALLETTA 1663

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH ISRAELI AMBASSADOR BENYACOV EVENING AUGUST 23, HE CLAIMED THAT MINTOFF HAS NOT RESPONDED TO HIS REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION OF REMARKS ON ARABS AND ISRAEL IN PARLIAMENT JULY 11. BENYACOV DID CONFIRM, HOWEVER, THAT MRS. MEIR HAD INDEED REQUESTED CHANGE OF VENUE FROM MALTA FOR SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL MEETING IN OCTOBER. HE EXPECTED THAT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, OR WHATEVER BOY HANDLES THIS MATTER, WOULD MAKE DECISION NEXT WEEK. EITHER WAY, HE EXPECTS THAT ISRAELI-MALTESE RELATIONS WILL BECOME EVEN MORE TENSE.

2. BENYACOV, INCIDENTALLY, IS BECOMING FAIRLY TENSE AND NERVOUS HIMSELF. HE REPORTS THAT IN THE LAST TWO DAYS HE HAS NOTED PAIRS OF YOUNG ARABS SAUNTERING PAST HIS COMBINED CHANCERY-RESIDENCE AS IF THEY WERE DOING RECONNAISSANCE. ALTHOUGH HE HAS FULL TIME GUARD OF AT LEAST TWO OR THREE MALTESE POLICE, PLUS CID SQUAD IN AUTOMOBILE, AS WELL AS HIS OWN FULL TIME SECURITY GUARD

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WITHIN PREMISES, HE PLANS TO EMPHASIZE THIS CONCERN WITH

POLICE AUTHORITIES. UNFORTUNATELY, ISRAELI CHANCERY-RESIDENCE IS LOCATED ONLY FEW HUNDRED YARDS FROM GZIRA AREA WHICH IS PRINCIPAL CENTER FOR 500 TO 800 LIBYANS WHO ARRIVE EVERY MONTH AS TOURISTS.

3. ON AUGUST 24, ITALIAN AMBASSADOR MASSA BERNUCCI STATED CATEGORICALLY THAT MINTOFF HAD REPLIED TO ISRAELI PROTEST 2 OR 3 DAYS AGO. HE DID NOT REVEAL SOURCE OF HIS INFORMATION BUT AGREED THAT REPLY MIGHT HAVE DONE DIRECTLY TO TEL AVIV RATHER THAN THROUGH ISRAELI EMBASSY.

4. COMMENT: WHILE MINTOFF RARELY OBJECTS TO BEING CENTER OF CONTROVERSY, IF SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL BACKS UP MRS. MEIR, HE WILL FIND HIMSELF IN SOMEWHAT VULNERABLE POSITION. SUCH FURTHER EVIDENCE OF MINTOFF'S LACK OF BALANCE IN ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUE, WHICH HE HAS SEIZED AS PRINCIPAL MALTESE FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEM, WILL NOT IMPROVE HIS POPULARITY IN MALTA AT LARGE AND WILL OFFER OPPOSITION A BETTER TARGET. GETZ

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